

DRAFT

Governor's Blue Ribbon Water Task Force

Meeting Notes October 18, 2005 Deming, NM

Attendees: Conci Bokum, Brian Burnett, Frank Chavez, Wayne Cunningham, John D'Antonio, Lisa Henne, Steve Hernandez, Sarah Kotchian, Elmer Lincoln, Estevan Lopez, G.X. McSherry, Karin Stangl, and Jack Westman attended the meeting. Guests included Amy Donaker and Luis Garcia (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Tink Jackson, and Tim Farmer.

The next meeting of the BRWTF will be November 16-17, 2005 in Albuquerque/

Deming Tour

The Deming tour included visits to pecan orchards to show three different types of irrigation: traditional flood, an above-ground drip system, and a new computer-controlled subsurface drip system. Task Force members also toured the Border Foods chile processing plant.

G.X. McSherry described the history of the Mimbres basin and changes in the local agricultural economy associated with a lowering of the water table and increased cost of extraction for irrigation.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Presentation

Amy Donaker and Luis Garcia from the NRCS described the agency's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), through which the NRCS provides a 50% (to a maximum of \$99,900) cost share for implementing conservation practices related to soil, water, air, and wildlife.

The cost-sharing program can be used for installation of new irrigation infrastructure that complies with agency specifications. To participate in the program, the farmer agrees to maintain the system for 10 years or pay back the money. Installation costs range from \$1250-2500 per acre, and typically up to 100-120 acres can be cost-shared at the full 50% under the NRCS program. Fixed costs associated with the filter station make it cheaper on a per-acre basis to install larger systems. To date, there have been 9000 acres of drip irrigation installed in New Mexico under this program, with the NRCS providing assistance to 16 farms in 2005. All of the farms that applied to the program were funded.

Economic studies are needed to get a better understanding of the payback period for installation of drip irrigation. The external costs and benefits from changes in farming practices under drip irrigation (e.g., cost of specialized implements, labor savings, water made available for other uses) should be captured in the analysis. The NRCS does not have in-house expertise for this level of economic analysis.

In addition to economic analyses of groundwater to drip irrigation, better research and data are needed for understanding how to optimize and maintain groundwater irrigation systems. For example, more research is needed on chemical application through drip irrigation systems. Stronger links between theory and practice should also be developed. New Mexico State University has done research on surface water irrigation and metering, but not on irrigating with ground water. Cal Poly has done some research on maintenance of subsurface drip systems (roots clogging, precipitation of chemicals) and is considered a leader in the field.

NRCS staff noted that because drip irrigation works best on sandy soils, soils that are not suited for flood irrigation often work well under drip.

OSE Updates

Tink Jackson gave a presentation on AWRM in the Mimbres basin (see presentation slides at eweb.lanl.gov/blueribbon).

State Water Plan Implementation Report

Karin Stangl passed out a draft of the State Water Plan implementation progress report for feedback from the Task Force. There will be another category for AWRM added to the report. Suggestion and comments from Task Force members included:

- Use bold or other formatting to draw out key points.
- Add section called “Challenges” or “Opportunities”, or “Next Steps” to identify where additional resources will be needed.
- Move policy references up to the top. These references might not need to be verbatim from the plan.
- In the Adjudications and Settlements progress report, mention specific beneficiaries from the Navajo Settlement (e.g. Albuquerque, San Juan Chama users).

Karin will send an updated draft to the Task Force for further review.

Navajo Water Rights Settlement

Scheduling for the tour and media event continues to be difficult.

UNM prepared a scope of work and has begun working on a review of the economic analysis documents that have already been prepared and on the study of the economic impacts of the construction phase. It will cost approximately \$30K to follow through with the deeper layers of analysis (see notes from September 23 teleconference).

OSE Priorities

John D'Antonio briefed the Task Force on OSE priorities for capital outlay requests, which include AWRM; settlements; compact compliance; ESA, NEPA, and mitigation; Pecos settlement funding; dam renovation and repairs, Elephant Butte pilot channel; ground and surface water measurement; and the Santa Fe monitoring well.

Legislative priorities for the OSE include:

- State Engineer enforcement
- Funding of the Water Rights Settlement Fund
- Pecos Settlement land and water acquisition act
- Ute dam construction fund
- Water master funding

Annual Report to the Governor

Sarah Kotchian passed out a draft of the Task Force's annual report. John D'Antonio and Estevan Lopez provided feedback on the prioritization of Task Force recommendations related to OSE/ISC activities. The OSE prioritized the Task Force recommendations as follows:

First Tier:

1. Funding for the Indian Water Rights Settlement Fund.
2. 18 Million to complete the Pecos Settlement.
3. Continued active support and resources to implement Active Water Resources Management.
4. Continued funding for the W.A.T.E.R.S. and Database Programs.
5. ESA/NEPA
6. Trust Funds

Second Tier:

7. Funding for the Office of the State Engineer Programs related to water and water conservation.
8. Conversion of 37 (thirty-seven) remaining temporary staff positions to permanent positions.

Third Tier:

9. Support for aquifer mapping; monitoring wells to measure drawdown rates and water quality; desalination projects (including partnership with GE, Sandia, and LANL).
10. Funding for USGS stream gauging stations. States had been paying for half of the cost for maintaining the gauging stations, but are now paying more than half due to escalating costs and flat budgets for the agency. Without additional state support, the USGS will not be able to maintain all of the existing stations. Data from these gauging stations are very valuable to the state.

John suggested that rather than reiterating the specific OSE priorities as recommendations in the Task Force annual report, the following general recommendations would be helpful for supporting the OSE:

1. AWRM
2. Water infrastructure and investment team
3. Environmental – ESA and NEPA, mitigation
4. Compact compliance

The revised draft will be handed out and finalized at the November meeting, with the goal of presenting it to the Governor in December.